



Charles Henry Laws M.D.
(1883-1962)

This was written by Dr. Laws and submitted by Edna Price for The History of Summers County West Virginia 1984:

I am a native of Virginia, having been born in Phoebus in 1883. I pursued my elementary studies in the Whitter public schools in Phoebus and finished the grades and two years high school. I entered Hampton Institute and stayed there for three years, after which I was advised by our local family physician. Dr. W.E. Adkins, to prepare myself for the study of medicine. I immediately adhered to the advice and entered Tidewater Institute and was graduated three years later, and took my pre-medical course at Shaw University, Raleigh, N.C. In 1907 I matriculated at Leonard Medical College and began to study medicine and won my M.D. degree in 1911. The following year I went to New York and took special work on chronic diseases.

This simple narrative of my education does not convey an adequate idea of the years of hard work that I went through. I was one of a family of thirteen, six were in school at the same time, three out in life and four dead. Accordingly, I was under the necessity of making enough money over the summer to pay my expenses. This served as a stimulus to greater efforts and taught me the application and self-reliance.

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In WWI, I was commissioned First Lieutenant and went overseas with the 372nd Infantry in the Medical Corps. I was in the thick of the fighting and won two gold medals.

At the close of the war I returned to the practice I had started in 1914 at Elkins, W.Va. On September 15, 1922 I located in Hinton. Business was good, everybody seemed to have a mutual understanding and things went off nicely.

Our next step was to modernize our home. To our delight the good people fell right in line, painted, remodeled and built beautiful homes almost one hundred percent. We next thought our City Government should have one of our race on the City Council to represent them, for we are heavy tax payers and love good government, and to my delight again my good friends of both races honored me by overwhelmingly electing me to that high office four successive terms of two years duration, twice without any competition.

During my stay there I tried to keep alert and work untiringly for the interest of my city, state, and country, and naturally to do this I would always be interested in the welfare of my race.

I will close this autobiography by dedicating the fruits of my activities and access the guiding hand of my deceased wife, Mrs. C.H. Laws, who untiringly, ably, fearlessly, and carefully for twelve successive years wrote "The News Among The Colored People in the Hinton Daily News."

(Excerpt taken from an article written by local Historian Fred Long.)

When Dr. Laws came to Hinton, he entered "an era of virulent, organized racism in southern West Virginia and across the country, with the Ku Klux Klan marching through Hinton in 1924. Nonetheless, when a new city council was seated in 1927, following the merger of Hinton with nearby Avis and Bellepoint, Laws was among those elected to office. He was the first African-American to give public service to the newly incorporated Hinton, serving on its first city council, and was reelected for four consecutive terms."

Dr. Charles Henry Laws We Salute You!

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